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**MEMORANDUM ON HOLDERS OF**  
**SNIE T1720-3-82**

**INF: THE PROSPECTS FOR  
WEST EUROPEAN DEPLOYMENT  
AND THE USSR'S REACTIONS**

Information available as of 9 August 1983 was  
used in the preparation of this Estimate.

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THIS ESTIMATE IS ISSUED BY THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE.

THE NATIONAL FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE BOARD CONCURS, EXCEPT AS NOTED IN THE TEXT.

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The Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency, and the intelligence organization of the Department of State.

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## FOREWORD

In October 1982 the Intelligence Community issued a Special National Intelligence Estimate, *INF: The Prospects for West European Deployment and the USSR's Reactions* (SNIE 11/20-3-82), that, among other judgments, estimated as "unlikely" the Soviet basing of nuclear weapons in Cuba in response to US intermediate-range nuclear force (INF) deployment. The principal purpose of this Memorandum is to discuss new information and insights that have developed in the 10 months since that SNIE, and to share with holders the Community's growing concern that the Soviets will respond to INF deployment in ways that will, either individually or in the aggregate, pose a significant challenge to US interests. Because of our heightened apprehension that the Soviets may feel compelled to make good on their threats to put US territory in an "analogous position," this Memorandum focuses on Soviet reactions over the next nine months or so. However, Moscow's struggle against INF and its reactions to deployment are likely to be played out over a longer period of time, and may turn out to be no less significant as a consequence.

The reader is forewarned that we still have very little direct or hard evidence concerning how the Soviets intend to play their political and military cards in the coming months. Thus, we are wary of making firm judgments about what the USSR will or will not do. In view of the profound consequences that would result if the Soviets made good on their more ominous threats, it is prudent to consider that such threats may represent expressions of intent rather than mere diplomatic rhetoric.

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## Memorandum to Holders of SNIE 11/20-3-82

1. As the date approaches for initial deployment in Western Europe of ground-launched cruise missiles (GLCMs) and Pershing II missiles, we are increasingly concerned about the possibility of significant Soviet countermeasures. Statements by key Soviet officials make clear that Moscow perceives INF deployment to be a powerful and historic challenge to Soviet security interests. We are impressed that Soviet leaders continue—as did Defense Minister Ustinov as recently as 29 July—to threaten to put US territory at risk in the same way as Soviet territory is by INF. Moscow's persistence is disquieting for what it may reveal of its real intentions and also because the continuing public threats will make it harder for the Soviets to back away. We are concerned that the Soviets are creating a situation in which the superpowers could slide into an action-reaction spiral with consequences not originally intended by the USSR or the United States.

2. Our concern about Soviet intentions stems also from the new dynamism of Soviet foreign policy under Andropov and the willingness of Moscow to run risks and to pressure the United States in areas of its vital interests, as they are now doing in Central America and the Middle East.

3. Ten months ago in SNIE 11/20-3-82, *INF: The Prospects for West European Deployment and the USSR's Reactions*, the Intelligence Community concluded that:

- Despite strong opposition from peace groups, deployment of intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF) was likely to proceed.
- The USSR would be likely to respond by making counterdeployments in Europe and by deploying submarines equipped with sea-launched cruise missiles (SLCMs) near US coasts.
- It was unlikely that the Soviets would take either overt unambiguous steps to deploy nuclear weapons to Cuba or covertly introduce them there.

4. The Community still holds to the first two views. But we are more concerned that the Soviets may decide to exercise Cuban options. Specifically:

- The Community now believes that there is a good chance—but still somewhat less than fifty-fifty—that the Soviets will send on visits to Cuba Bear bombers configured to carry air-launched cruise missiles (ALCMs) or submarines with SLCMs.
- The Community believes that the Soviets are unlikely to send land-based missiles to Cuba or to use Cuban facilities to service nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs). We give them about a 1-in-10 chance.

and the Soviet calculus could be different or could change quickly. The Air Force and the Army rate the chances of SS-20s as significantly higher (1 in 4). For a fuller explanation of these views, see paragraphs 23-28. Also, see paragraph 36 for an alternative view from the Director of INR.

## The Importance of INF Deployments to the USSR

5. We believe the Soviets view INF deployment with great concern. Moscow recognizes that deployment would strengthen the perception of the linkage of US nuclear weapons to the defense of Europe, would threaten key strategic targets in Moscow and the western USSR, would complicate Soviet war planning, and would constitute a profound political setback to the USSR.

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probably perceive the P-II, with the MX and the D-5, as part of a future US first-strike capability. The Soviets are also concerned that INF would create a precedent whereby future US theater deployments could threaten to impact on the overall strategic relationship with the United States.

7. The P-IIs and GLCMs will also enhance NATO's theater nuclear capabilities and complicate Moscow's strategy for fighting a conventional war in Europe. These missiles will have the capability of hitting a wide variety of targets in Soviet territory, while existing ones do not. Moreover, in addition to being mobile the GLCMs will be deployed deep in NATO's

rear, making it tougher for the Soviets to neutralize them early in a conflict.

8. The Soviets also see the political stakes as very important. If they can frustrate INF deployment, they would have seriously undermined NATO cohesion, eroded West European willingness to resist Soviet pressures, and thus won a major Soviet political victory. The Soviets might then manage to prevent NATO modernization entirely.

9. To meet the INF threat, the Soviets have four courses open to them: *pressure the West Europeans* to stop or limit deployment, *negotiate* for the same purposes, *coerce the United States* into swapping P-IIs and GLCMs for comparable Soviet deployments, and, finally, *cope* militarily and politically with the deploy-

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ment. These discrete courses are not mutually exclusive. The Soviets are capable of following more than one at the same time, and some combination of the four, spread over time, is the most likely Soviet response to INF.

### Political Pressure To Forestall Deployment

10. We expect the Soviets to work hard between now and December to get the West Europeans to postpone deployment. Moscow's chief target will be West Germany. One reason the Soviets have singled out P-II for special emphasis is that West Germany is the only country in which it will be deployed. They will use a combination of bilateral diplomacy, active measures in support of disruptions at P-II-related facilities in the Federal Republic, propaganda targeted on West European audiences, and preparatory moves in the USSR and Eastern Europe to remind NATO of the military consequences of deployment. The Soviets are almost certain to make new proposals for an INF settlement in the early fall. Their purpose will be to encourage sentiment for postponement of deployment in Western Europe by raising the prospect of Soviet flexibility and willingness to reach a genuine accommodation.

11. Moscow will raise the pressure on the Kohl government by making more pointed references to the "palisades of missiles" that would come to divide West and East Germany in case of NATO deployment, and by attempting to woo the Social Democratic leadership (particularly Helmut Schmidt) into calling for postponement. The Soviets could significantly raise the ante by harassing West Berlin and throwing into question the Quadripartite Agreement. Moscow will be reluctant to go this far, calculating that such tactics would unite rather than divide the West Germans and at some cost to its long-term strategy of chipping away at Bonn's relationship with the United States and NATO. But the Soviets have miscalculated reactions in West Germany before, and there is a significant chance—Andropov's July assurances to Kohl notwithstanding—that the Soviets will use West Berlin to underline their concerns about INF.

### Negotiating a Limit to Deployment

12. If, as we expect, the Soviet pressure campaign is failing and NATO is holding firm to its deployment

commitment, Moscow in late November or early December will need either:

- To make a deal sanctioning some US deployments.
- To take military countermeasures to pressure the United States to forgo deployments.
- Or, to live with the initial deployments and seek to limit them by continuing political pressure.

13. The Soviets probably believe that sentiment for a settlement of the INF issue will grow in Western Europe and perhaps in the United States as deployment draws near. They probably interpret the continuing attention given the "walk in the woods" formula, particularly by West German leaders, as evidence that there is considerable interest in finding a way out of the INF impasse, even at the expense of P-II deployment. Moscow may well believe that it can solve its P-II "problem" any time it chooses to, by agreeing to the deployment of GLCMs and by compromising on involving other issues, including compensation for French and British missiles in the context of the strategic arms reduction talks (START). It may believe that it only has to keep the pressure on in Western Europe and to wait for the right moment to reveal its compromise. As we move closer to deployment, however, Moscow may come to believe that there is an irreducible minimum requirement that it will have to satisfy for a negotiated settlement—that is, some US GLCM deployments.

14. It may be a close call for Moscow, but we estimate that the Soviets will choose not to sanction any US deployments before they are an accomplished fact. The Soviets would reason that:

- They would have accepted the precedent of a US capability to attack the USSR with theater land-based missile systems for strategic advantage without any corresponding capability for the USSR.
- They would, in effect, be accepting a significant political victory for the United States and NATO, and would be strengthening the idea that a tough line with the USSR pays off.

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These considerations are likely to be more persuasive than the Soviet calculation that:

- The USSR could negotiate to remove all (or almost all) Pershing II missiles, and to put a cap on future INF deployments, thus removing a significant military threat.
- An agreement would demonstrate the USSR's "reasonableness" and put additional pressure on the United States to conclude a START agreement more favorable to the USSR, and also help revive the detente line in Western Europe.

### Soviet Military Initiatives

15. The Soviets will almost certainly feel it necessary to take some action directed against US territory in response to INF, if only to maintain some credibility in light of their frequent threats to do so. A more far-reaching objective would be to force the United States to stop INF deployments. However, the Soviets will be hard pressed to choose among measures that will make good on their threats without going so far as to provoke a major confrontation.

#### Low-Risk Options

16. The deployment of SLCM-equipped submarines near US coasts—from bases in the Soviet Union—was judged as the most likely Soviet option in the October 1982 Estimate. The Soviets could have a few submarines configured to carry SLCMs by early 1984. This option remains the most likely response, particularly if the Soviets are looking for one that does the minimum to make good on their threats, but without provoking a major crisis. SLCMs from Soviet submarines would pose a serious warning threat to the continental United States. However, we strongly doubt that Moscow would view such deployments as having enough impact to cause the United States to change its policy on INF deployment.

17. The Soviets probably have rejected placing missiles in the extreme eastern portions of Siberia, from which they could reach large portions of the western United States. [ ] It seems likely that the Soviets would reject such a course because of the physical difficulty and costs of placing and main-

taining SS-20s in the extreme eastern part of the USSR, and because deployments would not have, or be seen to have, much impact on the US-Soviet military relationship.

#### Cuba

18. The Soviets almost certainly have considered deployments of nuclear weapons in the Western Hemisphere; Cuba is the only feasible location. Neither Grenada nor Suriname is an attractive staging area for Soviet ballistic missile submarines, or for land-based ballistic or cruise missiles, in view of the limited infrastructure and the vulnerability of those countries to any US military response. The Soviets probably consider Nicaragua equally unattractive for the same reasons.

19. The Soviets could encounter difficulty in enlisting Fidel Castro's cooperation for any effort involving Cuban territory that ran a risk of confrontation with the United States. But Moscow would use its considerable leverage and give assurances about protecting Cuba's security. In such circumstances, Castro probably would acquiesce, even if reluctantly.

#### Probes in Cuba

20. Short of a decision to actually deploy nuclear weapons in Cuba, the Soviets could take ambiguous steps to demonstrate that this is a live option, steps they could reverse without appearing to back down. Some of these could also be used as preparations for implementing a nuclear weapons option later on. These moves might include:

- Significant improvements to air defenses in Cuba, which could include the introduction of Soviet-manned SA-5s, new air-interceptor fighters, possibly the airborne warning and control system (AWACS), and possibly the SA-X-12.
- Introduction of additional Soviet troops into Cuba.
- Increased port calls by Soviet combatant ships and nuclear attack submarines.

#### Air-Launched Cruise Missiles and Submarines With Missiles to Cuba

21. There is a good chance—but still somewhat less than even—that the Soviets will send on periodic visits

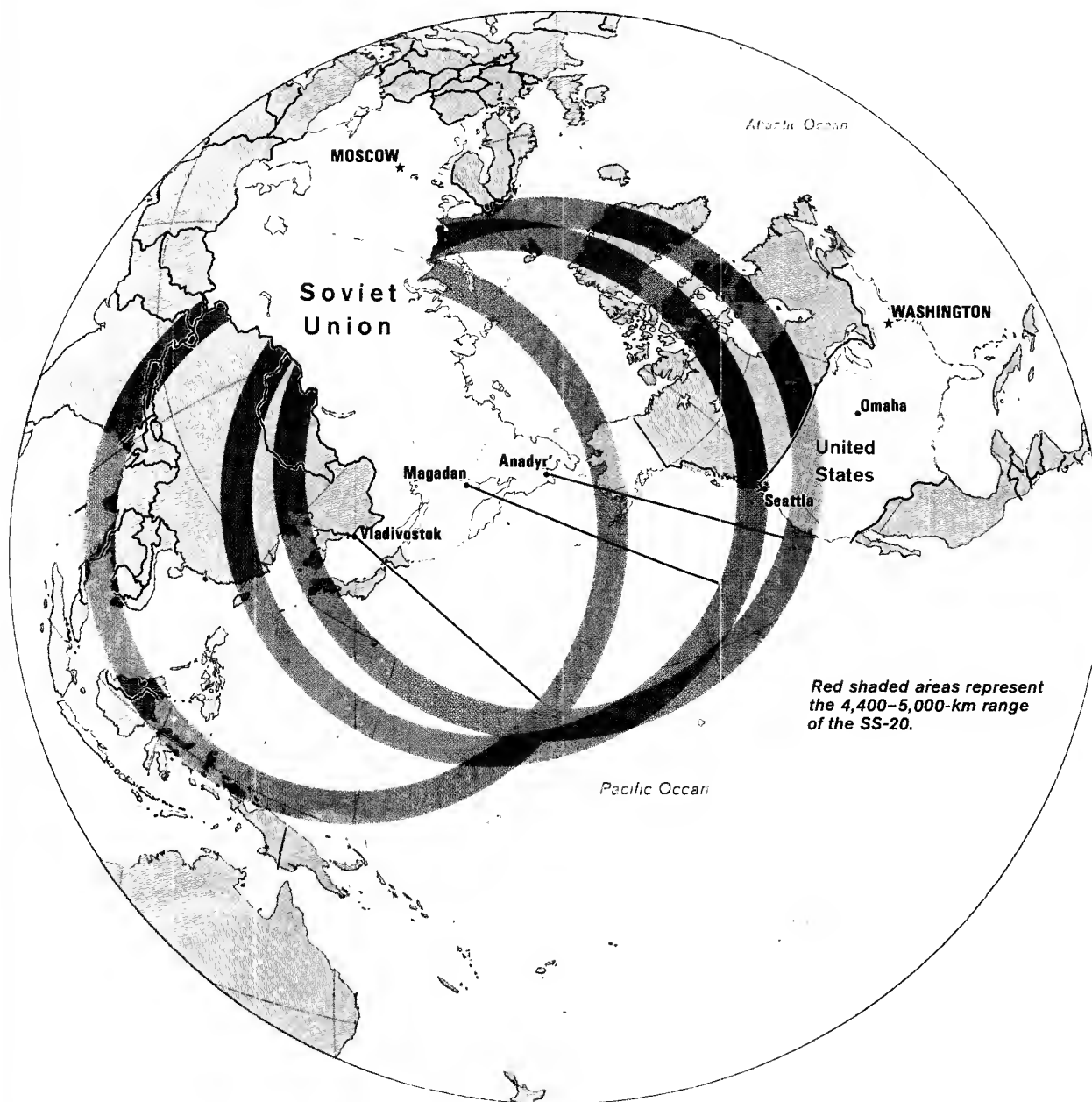
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**Figure 2**  
**Range of SS-20 From Hypothetical Bases in the Soviet Far East**



Red shaded areas represent  
the 4,400-5,000-km range  
of the SS-20.

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to Cuba Bear bombers configured to carry ALCMs or SLCM-equipped submarines. We have revised our estimates of the availability of ALCMs since last fall; we now believe that some missiles and a few Bear aircraft would be ready for deployment in late 1983.

22. We believe that the Soviets might find these options far more attractive than sending land-based missiles or submarines equipped with ballistic missiles to Cuba because they would be more ambiguous, more easily reversible, and hence less provocative. Moscow might hope that the fact that it had sent offensive nuclear weapons to Cuba—the ambiguity notwithstanding—would create a political environment in which its offers to limit SS-20 deployment in return for no US INF deployment would be accepted with only minimal additional concessions on the USSR's part.

#### Missiles in Cuba

23. There are important reasons why the Soviets might seriously consider sending missiles to Cuba:

- As described in paragraphs 5-7, the Soviets perceive INF deployments as constituting a significant military threat; it is possible that they believe that the only way (aside from negotiating an unfavorable settlement) to stop such deployments is by confronting the United States with a comparable threat.
- SS-20s and cruise missiles in Cuba would provide some limited military advantage. Specifically, they would threaten Strategic Air Command bases located in the south-central United States and raise the level of the short-warning threat to command, control, and communications targets in the continental United States.
- Soviet leaders might be tempted by the enormous political payoff of facing down the United States in a second Cuban missile crisis. The ramifications would be of historic dimension, felt well beyond INF and Western Europe. The Soviets might be convinced that, since the USSR is in a profoundly stronger military position vis-a-vis the United States than it was in 1962, the chances are good that it can win a major victory in a repetition of the 1962 crisis.

— They could also convince themselves that a crisis would split US public opinion rather than generate a strong consensus supporting US military action, that Cuba itself is more heavily defended than it was in 1962 and the administration would be deterred by the prospect of substantial losses, and that the West Europeans would press Washington for a negotiated solution.

24. While these are strong arguments for the USSR's placing missiles in Cuba, the incentives, in our view, are likely to be overshadowed by the following:

- The Soviets probably believe that, with new deployments of defensive weapons and more survivable command, control, and communications systems, they could eventually limit any deficiencies in their capabilities to carry out their strategic or theater war strategies caused by the P-IIs or GLCMs. They are already making improvements to their command and control survivability with a view to the MX and D-5 threat as well as to that of the P-II. They are working on defensive systems against the cruise missile threat, which they will face even if the GLCMs are never deployed in Western Europe.

— Despite the military changes since 1962, Cuba is still far from the Soviet Union and the overwhelming preponderance of military power in the region still rests with the United States. This consideration is likely to weigh very heavily in the Soviet calculus.

— The Soviets recognize that there is considerable sentiment in the United States for a firm position with the USSR, around which strong support for military action might well coalesce. The Soviets might believe that, in view of its general position on protecting US interests vis-a-vis the USSR, the Reagan administration would not be inclined to accept a "compromise" solution to the crisis that met the USSR's INF objectives.

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— The Soviets almost certainly believe that the United States would be likely to respond with force to Soviet moves to actually deploy land-based missiles in Cuba.

25. Therefore, we believe that it is unlikely (about a 10-percent chance) that the Soviets will deploy SS-20s or other land-based missiles in Cuba either before INF deployment or in the months after. We view even a 1-in-10 chance as reason for concern.

There is a significant risk that Moscow's calculus could change if the United States failed to respond to any initial Soviet probes, or if the United States failed to make clear a firm resolve to resist such a deployment. There is also some possibility that a situation involving threatened nuclear deployments to Cuba could escalate into one wherein the dynamics of the threat—initially made for political or bargaining purposes—take on a momentum of their own, and produce results not foreseen or intended by either Moscow or Washington.

26. The Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army, believes that the likelihood that SS-20s will be placed in Cuba is greater than the Estimate concludes. The Soviet leadership, while aware of the potentially great risks involved in deploying SS-20s to Cuba, is also cognizant of, and might be tempted by, the significant political (and to a lesser extent military) gains that would be achieved if the United States were forced to back down in a second Cuban missile crisis. Furthermore, given the significantly different US-Soviet military balance today as compared with 1962, Soviet leaders might anticipate that another Cuban missile crisis, in conjunction with renewed Soviet declarations about a desire to negotiate, would prompt West European leaders to pressure the United States to withdraw the Pershing II missiles and would split US opinion rather than generate a strong consensus in favor of US military action. The Army concludes, therefore, that there is a 25-percent chance that SS-20s will be introduced into Cuba.

27. The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Department of the Air Force, also believes there is a more significant chance (25 percent) that the Soviets may deploy SS-20s to Cuba. He stresses the Community assessment that the Soviets believe Pershing II deployments will pose a serious, time-urgent threat to a wide range of critically important targets in the USSR, including their national command authority and central command, control, and communications structure. He believes the Soviets may judge that deployment of nuclear-capable systems to the Caribbean is the only response that would pose a threat to the United States comparable to the INF threat to the USSR, and thereby might persuade the United States to negotiate a withdrawal of the Pershing II. All other "analogous responses" would be seen as ineffectual. Some of these, including ALCM-equipped Bears and SLCM-equipped submarines, depend on new weapon systems that may not be operationally ready when required.

28. The Director, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, does not see a cause for an increase in the level of concern regarding Cuba. The Director agrees with the Community view that the introduction of SS-20s in Cuba is unlikely, but also believes that any deployment of ALCMs or SLCMs is even more doubtful. The Soviets would see these systems as equally provocative as land-based systems, readily detectable, and dependent on launch vehicles that are more vulnerable to US retaliatory action. Further, the Soviet risk calculus is not as susceptible to sudden change as the Memorandum implies; the Soviets would be unlikely to believe that they could measure the US reaction to the introduction of nuclear systems in Cuba on the basis of the US response to any lesser actions.

#### Detected Activities in Cuba

29. We have no clear evidence of any Soviet military preparations for "analogous" response against the United States. This does not foreclose the possibility that preparations for military deployments in Cuba are already under way, because the Soviets have the capability to undertake them undetected.

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### Deployments Against NATO Europe

30. Moscow almost certainly will resume the construction of new SS-20 bases in the European USSR as a response to INF deployments. The Soviets are testing a new variant of the SS-20 which could be available for deployment in mid-1984. The Soviets might deploy the variant and claim that because it was different from the SS-20 it constituted an "analogous" response to INF. The Soviets probably will begin limited deployment of their long-range GLCM in the western USSR in early 1984, claiming it is a direct response to US GLCM deployments. The Soviets might deploy SS-20s or GLCMs in Eastern Europe for their political impact, although both systems can reach all of Western Europe from the USSR and they would be more vulnerable in Eastern Europe.

31. The Soviets are also planning to deploy new short-range ballistic missile (SRBM) systems in Eastern Europe. The SS-23 SRBM was developed as a replacement for Scud missiles already deployed in non-Soviet Warsaw Pact (NSWP) areas. The Soviets would probably characterize SS-23 deployments as a response to US INF deployments, but, in fact, they have planned for years to upgrade existing Soviet units in Eastern Europe with this system. The SS-12/22 SRBM is currently garrisoned in the Soviet Union as a theater asset; these units would probably move forward into NSWP countries during wartime. Pre-positioning these systems in Eastern Europe would represent a departure from this pattern, and would be a response to US INF.

### Beyond Initial Deployment

32. Moscow probably believes that, once US missiles go into Europe, they will be very difficult to remove. Hence, the Soviet preoccupation with stopping deployment before it takes place. But the Soviets are not likely to see the emplacement of a few P-IIs in West Germany and GLCMs in Italy and the United Kingdom as the end of the INF struggle, particularly since deployments occur over a five-year period. The chances are good that Soviet carrot-and-stick tactics will continue after December.

33. This means that the threat of Soviet counter-deployments will continue after the first P-IIs and GLCMs become operational. We might well see a

continuum of Soviet military actions spread over the next nine months or so that involves such activities as significantly upgrading Cuban air defenses, or a visitation of ALCM-configured Bears to the island, or perhaps port visits by submarines equipped with cruise or ballistic missiles. We cannot predict the mix or timing of such actions, and they are likely to be greatly affected by US responses. But we are persuaded that the Soviets might well believe that such ambiguous actions could sufficiently raise the level of concern in the United States and Europe to spur a new effort to reach a negotiated settlement.

34. We expect that, after an appropriate show of displeasure and an interruption of INF talks, the Soviets will resume negotiations. They may suggest a merger of START and the INF talks, a face-saving device that might also improve their negotiating position. In any event, the Soviets will most likely claim that the new intermediate systems they have deployed (GLCMs, additional or modified SS-20s, or new intermediate-range ballistic missiles) are countermeasures to the US GLCMs and P-IIs. In this way they will seek to protect their current SS-20 forces and focus the negotiations on the "new systems."

35. The Soviets have long demonstrated that they approach problems in a longer time frame than does the West. The historic importance of the INF deployment, both the military complications it presents for the USSR's strategy of conducting war in Western Europe and the reinforcement of US ties to Europe, will almost certainly generate a host of Soviet responses over the coming years. We are likely to see the USSR working against the deployment in the forthcoming Conference for Disarmament in Europe and in START. We will see the Soviets make military adjustments to cope with the targeting problem presented by the P-IIs, and particularly the GLCMs. We are likely to see the Soviets justify a further buildup of their missile force in Europe because of the INF deployment.

### An Alternative View From the Director of INR

36. The Director, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, believes that much of the case for Soviet risk taking is overdrawn. The Soviet reaction to INF deployments is likely to be

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spread out over a considerable period of time rather than focused on the initial deployments. While Moscow will see the initial deployment in December as a setback, the Soviets will not wish to call further attention to their political defeat and would not conclude it required an immediate counteraction entailing high costs or risks. The Soviet military response will more likely be shaped by what Moscow sees as military requirements than by an effort to effect an analogous response. There would thus be an evolutionary effort in Soviet theater forces to mitigate the incremental effects of INF deployments. These will probably include defensive measures—improved air defense, surface-to-air missile

(SAM) systems with antiballistic missile (ABM) capabilities, and hardening of key installations—as well as increments to offensive forces. He believes that, while the Soviets are likely to announce an end to their unilateral moratorium in reaction to the December deployment, the USSR could elect to defer actual SS-20 deployments for political reasons. Moreover, other systems may better fit the military requirements for a response to INF. By focusing on the short term, this Memorandum does not adequately emphasize the postdeployment Soviet interests in capping, if not reversing, INF deployment by political action. This interest will also have a more restraining effect in the Soviet risk calculus than the Memorandum suggests.